

on your plate

Q: My daughter is a big cereal eater but hates all the gluten-free cereals currently on the market. We were wondering if any “regular” cereals that we find on supermarket shelves are gluten free. We heard that Corn Pops used to be gluten free but they aren’t any more.

A: What you heard is correct. Corn Pops are no longer safe for those on the gluten-free diet.

Are you sure you’ve tried all of the gluten-free cereals currently available? They may not be on supermarket shelves, but they are usually easy to purchase.

If a single cereal doesn’t please her, try more than one. Some people mix cereals—a little of this and a little of that—and concoct their own blend. Your daughter might enjoy creating something that is “hers.”

If all your efforts to find a cereal fail, you will have to look at alternatives. Vans and Mesa Sunrise waffles are gluten free. You can make and freeze gluten-free pancakes yourself.

Gluten-free bread can make toast, which becomes cinnamon toast if you sprinkle cinnamon sugar on it.

Yogurt and fruit also make a good breakfast that doesn’t take a lot of time. Yogurt seems to be a kid-friendly food.

Finally be sure to read the article about whole grains that begins on page 16. Everyone, whether on the gluten-free diet or not, is being encouraged to consume whole grains which are a lot healthier than many cold cereal products found on the supermarket shelf.

Q: I have a salad dressing I’d like to use but can’t get in touch with the company. According to the label, it contains soya oil, sesame seed oil and ginger. Have you ever heard of soya oil? I was wondering if it is gluten free.

A: Soya is another name for soy. According to the dictionary, “soya” is the term used in the United Kingdom to refer to soy. To follow the gluten-free diet, you need to avoid wheat, rye and barley. Soy or soya is gluten free.

Q: I am new to gluten-free living. I have been unable to locate any information about whether semolina contains gluten. Do you have any information that will clear this up for me?

A: Semolina is a form of wheat and therefore not safe for those who follow a gluten-free diet. The Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act, which went into effect last year, says processors have to identify wheat in common terms.

That means, the label should now read: “semolina (wheat), which is the way I would think processors do it. Or they may use the phrase “contains wheat” below the ingredients list.

Other names for wheat are durum, farina, einkorn, bulgar, cake flour, matzo and couscous.

Spelt and kamut are forms of wheat and triticale is a combination of wheat and rye. Avoid them all.*

Q: I continue to find differing views on this subject: Is there gluten in either scotch or bourbon? There doesn’t seem to be any consensus.

A: Both of these alcoholic beverages are distilled. While there may be a lack of consensus in the celiac community, the scientific community is in total agreement that distillation effectively removes gluten peptides.

That means the resulting product would be gluten free unless something that contains gluten was added after distillation, which would be unusual in alcoholic beverages.

Q: Are red potatoes ok for a gluten-free diet? I am catering a wedding for a bride who has celiac disease and wants all the food to be wheat and gluten free.

A: Potatoes have nothing to do with the gluten-free diet, which excludes wheat, rye, and barley.** They might be cooked with gluten-containing ingredients, but potatoes themselves are gluten free.

It’s easy to make the gluten-free diet complicated. That’s why we some-

times hear questions that seem to come from left field.

For example, we were recently asked if peanuts were gluten free (they are). Products that contain peanuts might also contain gluten but in and of themselves peanuts are gluten free.

Q: Is general anesthesia used during surgery safe for those who follow a gluten-free diet? Many medications are wheat based and I am told that is also true of anesthesia.

A: You have to ingest gluten for it to be harmful. General anesthesia is either injected or inhaled. It would be in the form of gases or medication dissolved in a solvent, either water or saline. There is absolutely no risk of gluten in anesthesia.

Medications are rarely given by mouth prior to surgery because the stomach has to be empty for at least eight hours before surgery begins.

Most prescribed medications in the US do not contain gluten. Cornstarch is the filler, according to Peter Green, MD, founder and executive director of the Celiac Disease Center at Columbia University.

*Gluten-Free French Desserts and Baked Goods is a new gluten-free cookbook on the market that is especially attractive. But some of the recipes call for “rice semolina” or “cream of farina.” The authors are simply misusing the terms and mean a form of rice or cream of rice cereal. But their misuse could be dangerous. The words semolina and farina refer to wheat. I called the publishing company and they are going to correct the error when they reprint.

**Currently oats are not universally recommended for the gluten-free diet here in the United States due to fears of contamination. But studies have shown that a limited amount of oats is safe for most people who follow a gluten-free diet.

Send your questions to: gfliving@aol.com or Gluten-Free Living, 560 Warburton Ave., 2nd floor, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706.